
Port Management Training Course: Terminal Operations, Performance and Commercial Strategy

1 – 12 March 2027
Cape town





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Programme Summary

Port management is the subject of this two-week training course for port and terminal directors, harbour authority executives and logistics heads, ending in a port improvement plan for one terminal or port. Leaders in these roles balance berth productivity, tariffs, customer needs and safety under pressure from shipping lines and cargo owners. The programme moves from governance and strategy through terminal operations, performance measurement and commercial terms, then applies each tool to one operation. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on port management for mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Ports compete on reliability, cost and connections. Delays at the berth, congestion at the gate and unclear commercial terms push cargo and shipping lines elsewhere, while unmeasured performance hides where the time goes. Directors who can read port data, set clear operating and commercial rules and align the port community make better investment and service decisions across container, bulk and general cargo operations.

- Vessel Turnaround Time: Shortens as berth planning, equipment and yard flows are managed as one system.
- Terminal Productivity: Improves as measures are defined, tracked and compared across periods.
- Commercial Return: Strengthens as tariffs and concession terms are tied to service and cost.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Landlord, tool and service port governance models: They frame the ownership and role choices examined in Sessions 1 and 2.
- Berth productivity and ship turnaround measures: They structure the performance work in Sessions 3 and 6.
- Time value of money: It underpins the investment and tariff appraisal in Session 7.
- ISPS Code: It guides the port facility security review in Session 9.

Intended Participants

- Port and terminal directors who answer for throughput, cost and service levels.
- Harbour authority executives who set port rules, tariffs and development direction.
- Logistics heads who manage cargo flows through ports and inland links.
- Commercial leaders who negotiate with shipping lines, cargo owners and concession partners.
- Planning and performance managers who report port results to boards and regulators.

Typical sectors include container and bulk terminals, port authorities, shipping lines and freight logistics.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to compare port governance models and justify a role split between authority and operator.
2. Participants will be able to construct a port strategy that positions the port against competing ports.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose delays in berth, yard and gate operations and evaluate productivity against agreed measures.
4. Participants will be able to appraise a tariff structure and a concession term sheet.
5. Participants will be able to prioritise safety and security measures for a port facility.
6. Participants will be able to present a port improvement plan for one terminal or port.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Port Systems and Governance Models

How do ownership and role choices shape what a port can do?

- Landlord, Tool and Service Model Comparison
- Authority and Operator Role Map
- Port Value Chain Diagram
- Stakeholder Interest Register
- Governance Option Scoring Sheet

Day 2: Port Strategy and Market Position

How does a port decide where to compete and what to offer?

- Hinterland and Catchment Analysis
- Competing Port Benchmark Table
- Cargo Segment Opportunity Matrix
- Service Offer Positioning Canvas
- Port Development Option Screen

Day 3: Berth Planning and Vessel Operations

How are ships brought alongside, worked and sent away on time?

- Berth Allocation Planning Board
- Vessel Arrival Window Schedule
- Pilotage and Towage Coordination Sheet
- Ship Turnaround Time Breakdown
- Berth Delay Cause Log



Day 4: Yard, Gate and Hinterland Flows

How does cargo move between ship, yard and inland transport?

- Yard Capacity and Dwell Time Chart
- Gate Appointment Flow Design
- Rail and Road Connection Map
- Container and Bulk Storage Rules
- Congestion Early Warning Dashboard

Day 5: Equipment, Labour and Terminal Productivity

How are equipment and people organised to lift productivity?

- Cargo Handling Equipment Utilisation Report
- Shift Pattern and Labour Plan
- Maintenance Downtime Review
- Crane Productivity Analysis
- Productivity Improvement Action List

Day 6: Performance Measurement and Benchmarking

Which measures show whether the port is improving?

- Port Performance Scorecard
- Productivity and Service Measure Dictionary
- Data Collection and Quality Check Plan
- Peer Benchmarking Comparison
- Board Performance Report Layout

Day 7: Tariffs, Concessions and Port Contracts

How are charges and contract terms set to reward service and recover cost?

- Port Tariff Structure Review
- Concession Term Sheet Checklist
- Cost Recovery and Pricing Model
- Net Present Value Appraisal Grid
- Service Level Clause Library

Day 8: Customers, Shipping Lines and Port Community

How are the needs of port users turned into agreed service?



- Customer Segment Needs Interviews
- Shipping Line Negotiation Brief
- Port Community Forum Terms of Reference
- Service Complaint Tracking Log
- Customer Service Charter

Day 9: Safety, Security and Resilience

How does a port keep people, cargo and operations protected?

- ISPS Code Port Facility Security Review
- Dangerous Cargo Handling Rules
- Incident Reporting and Learning Process
- Business Continuity Scenario Sheet
- Port Safety Risk Register

Day 10: Applying the Tools to One Port

Do governance, operations, performance and commercial tools hold together for one port or terminal?

- Applying the Session 1 Role Map to the Port
- Testing the Session 3 Delay Log on Sample Data
- Running the Session 6 Scorecard on the Port
- Checking the Session 7 Term Sheet Checklist Against the Tariff
- Completing the Port Improvement Plan

Methodology

The programme uses case analysis and structured exercises built on anonymised terminal data, berth schedules, tariff extracts and short written cases from container, bulk and multipurpose ports. Participants work in small groups on one port, explain their reasoning to peers from other organisations and receive facilitator feedback on each work product, including every schedule, measure and term sheet review.

- Suggested activity: Breaking down a vessel turnaround record to find where time was lost.
- Suggested activity: Comparing two tariff structures against cost and service aims.
- Suggested activity: Preparing a negotiation brief for a shipping line contract.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a port improvement plan for one terminal or port. It holds a governance and role summary, a strategy position, a delay diagnosis, a performance scorecard, a tariff and contract review and a safety and security priority list. The plan is used at work to brief boards, agree targets with operators and guide the next round of investment and service decisions.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is port management suitable for directors who have not run a terminal?

Yes. The programme assumes a working knowledge of cargo or logistics, not terminal engineering, and builds from how ports are organised and governed.

Which models does port management rest on in this programme?

It rests on landlord, tool and service governance models, berth productivity and ship turnaround measures, the time value of money and the ISPS Code.

How is the improvement plan for port management used at work?

You use it to brief boards, agree targets with terminal operators and guide your next round of investment and service decisions.

How does port management differ from a programme on shipping company strategy?

It centres on berths, yards, tariffs and port users, while shipping company strategy centres on fleet, freight markets and vessel investment.